ATLAS

KID COLT OUTLAW

KID COLT'S BRAND-NEW THRILLS!

KID COLT OUTLAW

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APR. NO. 59

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KID COLT OUTLAW IN "CURTAIN OF LEAD!"

IT'S THE FULLER GANG, AND THAT'S BLACKIE FULLER IN THE LEAD! THEY'RE THE MOST WANTED GANG IN THE WHOLE TERRITORY!

WITH THE ABRUPTNESS OF A SUMMER STORM THE QUIET OF HOPEVILLE WAS SHATTERED! BURSTS OF ORANGE FLAME SPRANG FROM SMOKING SIX-GUNS, BUT FROM A POINT NEARBY, THE EVER ALERT **KID COLT** PREPARED TO TAKE A STAND—THE TIME FOR ACTION WAS **NOW!**

JACK KELLER

JOE

BUT AS THE KID STEPPED FORWARD, A LUCKY SHOT FROM THE DESPERADO'S COLT GRAZED HIS SHOULDER...

DRAW ON BLACKIE FULLER, HUH? I'LL TEACH YUH!

WE'LL BE MEETING AGAIN, FULLER! YOU AND I ARE GOING TO SETTLE FOR THIS...

YOU ALL RIGHT, SON?

IT ONLY GRAZED ME, OLD-TIMER! I'M SORRY I MISSED MY CHANCE AT 'EM!

THEY CLEANED OUT THE EXPRESS OFFICE AND WOUNDED JIM TAYLOR! WE'RE FORMIN' A POSSE!

THEN COUNT ME IN, SHERIFF!

MINUTES LATER THE POSSE HEADED OUT OF TOWN...

IT'LL BE A SHOWDOWN NOW!

WITH THE KID RIDIN' THAR AIN'T NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT!

MEANWHILE...

I C'N HEAR HOOF-BEATS, BLACKIE! THEY'VE GOT A POSSE GOIN'!

WE'VE HANDLED POSSES BEFORE! LET'S RIDE!

WHAT'S THE IDEA TURNIN' OFF? THIS IS THE LONG WAY 'ROUND!

BUT IT'S GONNA BE THE SAFEST WAY! YOU'LL SEE WHAT I MEAN!

THEY'RE HEADIN' THROUGH NEEDLE CANYON!

WHY WOULD THEY TURN OFF THIS WAY AND TAKE THE *LONG* ROUTE?

WHEN THEY REACHED THE CANYON'S MOUTH...

HOLD ON A MINUTE, SHERIFF!

HOLD ON? THEY'LL GET AWAY!

THEN, WITH A DEAFENING ROAR...

DYNAMITE! THEY HAD A SLOW FUSE GOIN'... AND WE WERE HEADING STRAIGHT FOR IT!

THERE'S STILL A CHANCE... EVEN IF WE *ARE* CUT OFF!

WITH THEM THINKING WE'RE THROUGH, THEY'LL SLOW DOWN...

IF YOU'RE THINKIN' I'LL BE GOING AFTER 'EM, YOU'RE WRONG...

MY AUTHORITY ENDS THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS CANYON, KID! I *COULDN'T* GO AFTER THEM!

BUT WHAT IF THEY WERE BROUGHT BACK TO THESE PARTS?

IN THAT CASE THEY'D... SAY! WHAT'RE YOU DRIVIN' AT?

I RECKON YOU KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT ONE, SHERIFF!

I'M TAKING THE RIVER TRAIL BELOW! SO LONG, SHERIFF!

WAIT... YOU CAN'T TAKE 'EM ON ALONE!

BUT THE KID WAS ALREADY OUT OF EARSHOT, HIS FACE GRIMLY SET... DETERMINED TO COMPLETE THE TASK HE HAD SET FOR HIMSELF...

MEANWHILE, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CANYON...

HAW, HAW! C'N YA PICTURE THE LOOK ON THAR FACES WHEN EVERYTHIN' WENT BOOM?

WHEN YA SAID YUH HAD *PLANS* FOR 'EM, BLACKIE... YOU SURE WEREN'T FOOLIN'!

I TOLD YA IT WAS A GOOD IDEA!

BUT AS THE OUTLAWS RELAXED, THE KID PRESSED ON, HIS GREAT STALLION BRINGING HIM CLOSER WITH EVERY THRUST OF HIS POWERFUL LEGS...

WHEN DUSK CAME, AND THEY HAD GATHERED ABOUT THEIR FIRE...

HOW SOON BEFORE WE PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF, BLACKIE?

SOON ENOUGH! BUT FIRST WE CROSS INTO MEXICO AN' HAVE OURSELVES A FIESTA!

UNKNOWN TO THE BOASTING BLACKIE, GRAY, PIERCING EYES OBSERVED THEIR EVERY MOVE!

I RECKON THIS IS AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY!

GO TO IT, BOY!

WITH A MIGHTY LEAP, THE MAGNIFICENT STEED CHARGED FORWARD, HIS FLASHING HOOFS FLAILING IN ALL DIRECTIONS... SCATTERING THE OUTLAWS' HORSES BEFORE HIM!

OUR HOSSES! THAT STALLION'S STAMPEDING 'EM!

DON'T STAND THAR, YUH FOOL! STOP 'EM!

YOU'RE STOPPING NO ONE!

THEN THE COLTS SPOKE OUT, DRIVING THE GUNMEN BACK!

OHHHH!

OWW!

YOU FIRST, BLACKIE!

AND SOON...

GO ROUND UP THEIR PONIES, STEEL! WE'LL BE NEEDING THEM TO TAKE THESE HOMBRES BACK TO HOPEVILLE!

THE FOLLOWING MORNING HOPEVILLE WITNESSED A MOST UNUSUAL SIGHT...

HE *DID* IT! HE BROUGHT 'EM BACK... AN' SINGLE-HANDED!

WHEN THE OUTLAWS WERE TURNED OVER TO THE LAW...

YOU C'IN STAY ON BEIN' MY DEPUTY, KID! IT'S YORE JOB AS LONG AS YOU WANT IT!

THANKS, SHERIFF, BUT I RECKON I'M SORT OF A ROLLING STONE! ADIOS AND GOOD LUCK!

THE END

THE STAGE TO STACEY

THREE people got off the stage in Stacey, Wyoming that morning, but the population only noticed one in particular.

"Mike Stacey's come back," the word went out.

"I don't see how he *dares!*"

"Does his pa know?"

Many eyes watched Mike Stacey alight from the stage and walk toward the hotel. But only the desk clerk dared to speak, and then he only said, "It's quite a surprise to . . . er . . . see you back in Stacey, Mr. Stacey."

"I'd like a room," Mike murmured.

"A room . . . here?" The desk clerk's astonishment showed through his attempt to keep his face an impersonal mask. "Well, that is, I thought you'd be staying out at the big ranch."

"I said," Mike spoke determinedly, "I'd like a room *here*. Do I get one?"

"Of course, sir . . . of course."

As soon as Mike Stacey disappeared up the rickety stairway with his bag and key, the room began to buzz with talk. No one noticed the other man come in . . . one of the others who had come off the stage. He was tall and angular, with a look of quiet determination about him. He asked for a room and the desk clerk gave him his key, hardly taking notice of him. If his mind hadn't been so full of Mike Stacey, he surely would have noticed the grim look in the stranger's eye, and the well-worn holster loosely carrying a pearl-handled Colt.

The third passenger on the stage was well-known in Stacey. He was the freight manager for the Wells Fargo station in the district. Every few weeks he'd come in town to tell the station manager in Stacey what shipments to expect in the near future. Lem Stewart waved his greetings to people on the street, but they hardly returned his hellos. They were busy spreading the news of Mike Stacey's unexpected return.

"Who *is* this Mike Stacey, Clint?" he asked the station master.

"I guess he was here before your time, Mr. Stewart," Clint said. "Mike is old man Stacey's son . . . you know, the biggest rancher in the territory."

"Sure, he's the one this town was named after. But why . . ." Lem Stewart started to ask, confused.

"It 'pears like the old man disowned him a few years back. There was a scandal around here. Somebody was gettin' news of freight shipments . . . gold . . . and passin' them along to a gang up in the hills. Every time the stage would run through, it'd get ambushed."

"That was just before I came out here," Lem recalled. "But I've heard the story. They finally got the gang, didn't they?"

"They sure *did*," Clint answered definitely. "They're servin' their time now. But they never did find the one who'd been tippin' them off."

"Lem nodded seriously. "Do you think Mike Stacey did it, Clint?"

"I don't know, Mr. Stewart," Clint nodded gravely. "Lots o' folks 'round here think he did, though nothin' was ever *proved* at the trial. His pa must have thought he did, 'cause right after that, Mike packed up and left town. This is the first time we've seen hide or hair of him since."

Lem's brow furrowed. "That makes it bad, Clint," he said. "I remember it was because of that incident that no gold has been shipped over Wells Fargo since that time. I felt good when I came in here . . ."

Clint looked at him surprised.

"You see, I came over this week to let you know that we've got the Golden Nugget Mine contracts again, and starting tomorrow, that stage is going to be carrying thousands of dollars worth of gold every trip."

Clint whistled apprehensively. "And with Mike Stacey back in town . . ."

A low voice from the door interrupted their conversation. "I wouldn't say you had anything to worry about, Clint, as long as you mind your own business."

"*Mike* . . . Mike Stacey!" Clint echoed.

"You heard?" Lem questioned.

"Sure I heard," Mike said. "But I knew about the gold

CONTINUED BEFORE LAST STORY

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Same young man after using KERAPLEX twice a day for just one week. Notice the decided improvement—pimples completely gone!

BEFORE

Note more than a dozen blemishes on just one side of this girl's face before KERAPLEX was applied.

AFTER

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KID COLT OUTLAW in "TROUBLE TRAIL!"

THE YOUNG MAN'S VOICE STRUCK HOLLOW TONES IN THE SILENT ROOM, AND ALL THAT *KID COLT* COULD DO WAS LISTEN, AS THE ANGUISH-FILLED WORDS WERE REPEATED AGAIN AND AGAIN...

HE'S GONE, KID! DAD TOLD ME IT WAS PETE LAWSON... HE'S GONNA PAY FOR THIS!

JACK KELLER

J17

THEY'LL FIND DAWSON, RANDY! THE SHERIFF IS ON HIS WAY OUT!

ELLEN'S RIGHT, RANDY! THERE'S NOTHING TO BE DONE TILL THE SHERIFF GETS HERE!

DAWSON WAS FEUDIN' WITH DAD FOR YEARS, AND THIS TIME HE WENT ALL THE WAY! THAT MAKES HIM ***MY*** BUSINESS!

NO, RANDY! DAWSON IS TOO DANGEROUS!

DON'T GO BITING OFF MORE THAN YOU CAN CHEW! DAWSON IS AN EXPERT SHOT!

I'M NOT ASKIN' FOR YOUR ADVICE, KID...

...AND I'M TELLIN' YOU TO STAY CLEAR! DAWSON IS *MY* BUSINESS... AND THAT'S THE WAY IT'S GOING TO STAY!

MINUTES LATER, WHEN RANDY POUNDED OFF...

I'M WORRIED, KID! WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS DAD COULD HAPPEN TO HIM! I LOVE HIM SO! WE WERE PLANNING TO GET MARRIED NEXT MONTH!

I KNOW, ELLEN ... BUT YOU'VE GOT TO PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER!

YOU WAIT HERE FOR THE SHERIFF! I'LL GO OFF AFTER RANDY AND SEE WHAT I CAN DO!

THANK YOU, KID!

I JUST HOPE I CAN CATCH UP WITH THAT YOUNG HOTHEAD! THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF HE CATCHES UP WITH DAWSON FIRST!

MY HUNCH IS THAT DAWSON WOULD LOOK FOR THE QUICKEST TRAIL OUT OF THE TERRITORY, AND THAT MEANS HE WOULD TAKE THE LOWER TRAIL ALONG SPIDER CREEK...

A SHORT WHILE LATER, AS PETE DAWSON WATERED HIS HORSE ALONG SPIDER CREEK...

HOOFBEATS... SOMEONE HEADED THIS WAY! I'LL HAFTA GIT MOVIN'!

BUT JUST AS THE FLEEING BADMAN BEGAN TO MOUNT, A SUDDEN THOUGHT BROUGHT A TWISTED SMILE TO HIS THIN LIPS...

WHY POKE ALONG WITH THIS TIRED-OUT NAG? FROM THE SOUND OF THEM HOOFBEATS, THAT PONY'S A NEAT PACER... AND JUST WHAT I NEED FOR SOME FAST RIDIN'!

SECONDS LATER, AS THE KID APPROACHED THE STREAM!

WHOA UP THERE, BOY! I RECKON WE CAN STOP LONG ENOUGH TO GIVE YOU A DRINK!

THEN, WITH A POWERFUL MOTION, THE GREAT STALLION REARED, ITS FRONT LEGS PAWING THE AIR, ITS WARNING WHINNY FILLING THE AIR...

I GET IT, BOY! GO TO IT... RUN FOR COVER!

MISSED! ONE MORE SECOND AND I'D HAVE HAD 'IM!

CHANCES ARE HE'LL HOLE UP AN' WAIT FOR ME TO COME OUTA THESE WOODS! MY BEST BET IS TO CIRCLE AN' COME IN FROM *BEHIND* 'IM!

BUT THE KID WASN'T A FOOL...

DAWSON FIGURES I'D WAIT FOR HIM TO MAKE A BREAK! CHANCES ARE HE'S CIRCLING AROUND AND PLANS COMING OUT SOMEWHERE BEHIND ME!!!

THAT MEANS MY BEST PLAY IS TO GET INTO THOSE WOODS AHEAD OF HIM, AND CUT HIM OFF!

WITHIN MINUTES, THE DENSE WOODS CLOSED AROUND HIM...

GOT TO BE CAREFUL! THE SLIGHTEST SOUND COULD GIVE ME AWAY!

AND AT A POINT ABOVE THE KID...

CAN'T RUSH IT! THAR'S ALWAYS THE CHANCE HE MIGHT'VE FIGGERED MY MOVE, AND IS TRYIN' TO CUT ME OFF!

SUDDENLY...

A DRY TWIG SNAPPIN'! HE'S IN HERE ALL RIGHT!

HERE HE COMES! HEADIN' STRAIGHT MY WAY...

FOOTSTEPS! WHY WOULD HE... *GREAT GUNS*... IT ISN'T DAWSON!

C'MON DAWSON! I KNOW YOU'RE IN HERE, AN' YOU'RE NOT SLIPPING OUT! SHOW YOUR HAND! I'M SETTLIN' FOR DAD!

THE YOUNG FOOL! HE'S WALKING RIGHT INTO IT!

ALL RIGHT, DAWSON! SHOW YOUR YELLOW HIDE! WHERE ARE YUH?

YOU ASKED FER IT, AN' YOU'RE GOIN' TO GET EXACTLY WHAT YORE PAW GOT!

BUT IN THAT DECISIVE MOMENT, THE KID ACTED! WITH A QUICK SPRING HE LEAPED INTO CLEAR VIEW UNMINDFUL OF THE TARGET HE PRESENTED...

HERE I AM, DAWSON... OR ARE YOU TOO SCARED TO MAKE YOUR PLAY?

THE STINGING WORDS BROUGHT DAWSON AROUND WITH A ROAR, BUT THE GLINT FROM HIS RIFLE WAS ALL THE KID NEEDED...

TOO SCARED, HUH! WHY, I'LL *OHHHH!*

OUCH!

I'LL FINISH YUH THIS TIME! *OWW!*

AND WHEN RANDY JOINED THE KID...

I WAS RIGHT IN HIS LINE OF FIRE... AND THEN YOU DREW HIM OFF! I ACTED LIKE A FOOL, AND STILL YOU RISKED YOUR LIFE TO SAVE MINE!

I'D SAY IT WAS A LIFE *WORTH* SAVING!

AND I THINK ELLEN WOULD AGREE WITH ME! JUST REMEMBER WHAT YOU LEARNED HERE TODAY! NEVER TAKE ON MORE THAN YOU CAN HANDLE!

I'LL REMEMBER THAT, KID... AND THANKS!

THE END

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KID COLT OUTLAW

IN "KING OF THE BADLANDS"!

HAW, HAW, HAW! C'MON, YUH PACK OF RABBITS! WHY DON'TCHA STAND UP AN' FIGHT LIKE MEN? HERE I AM, KING BELLOWS, DARIN' YUH TO TAKE ME! WELL, WHAT'RE YUH WAITIN' FOR?
JACK KELLER '56

THEY'VE GOT US PINNED DOWN! THERE ISN'T MUCH WE CAN DO FROM HERE!

I'LL TELL MY MEN TO FALL BACK! WE'VE HAD ENOUGH CASUALTIES AS IT IS!

SO THEY FELL BACK, AWAY FROM THE RAKING GUNFIRE...

WE'LL NEVER BREAK THROUGH KING'S STRONG-HOLD, AND SO LONG AS WE CAN'T SURVEY THE LAND, WE'RE STYMIED!

THAT'S JUST WHAT KING WANTS! AS LONG AS HE CAN KEEP THE RAIL-ROAD FROM COMING THROUGH, HE FIGURES HE'LL REMAIN BOSS OF THE BADLANDS!

MY MEN AND I AREN'T GUNFIGHTERS! I'M PULLING BACK TO CLAY CITY AND TELL THEM IT'S NO DEAL!

HOLD ON, MR. DORSET! IT'S MY HUNCH THAT KING AND HIS CREW AREN'T AS TOUGH AS THEY APPEAR! I'D LIKE ANOTHER CRACK AT 'EM!

YOU CAN'T TAKE THIS ON BY YOURSELF!

THIS TERRITORY ***NEEDS*** THE RAIL-ROAD, MR. DORSET! THEY'RE GOING TO HAVE IT DESPITE KING BELLOWS AND HIS PACK OF COYOTES!

LATER THAT EVENING, IN THE GUNMEN'S CAMP...

THEY'LL LEARN TUH STAY CLEAR OF THESE PARTS! I'LL TEACH 'EM THAT THE ***BADLANDS*** BELONG TUH ***ME!*** NO ONE PUSHES THE ***KING*** OUT!

WE DID ALL RIGHT IN THESE PARTS! LET'S CLEAR OUT WHILE THE GOING IS GOOD!

NO ONE MAKES ME CLEAR OUT, WILSON! I'M ***KING*** HERE... NO ONE PUSHES ME OUT!

NO ONE ***TELLS*** ME... ***WHAT?***

CONTINUED

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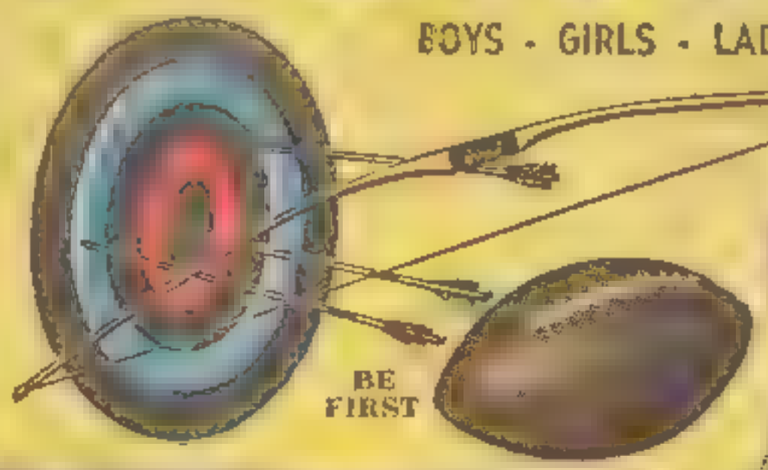

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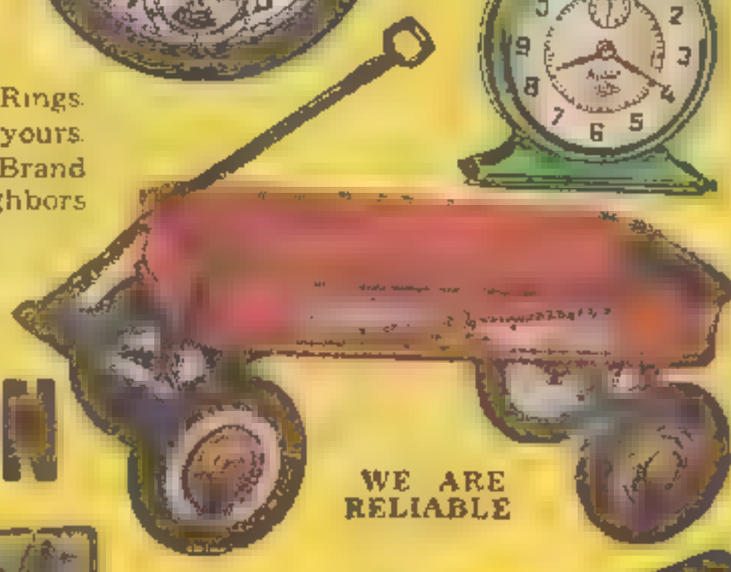

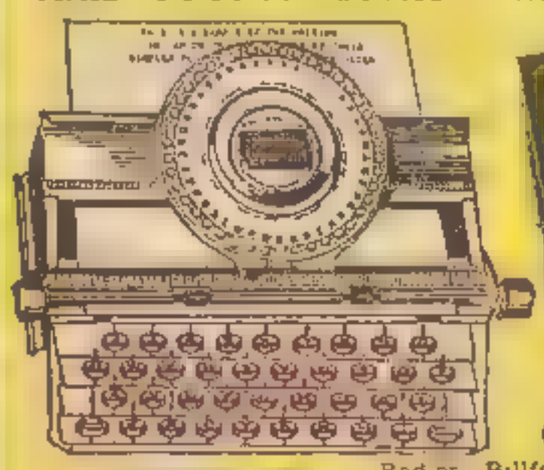

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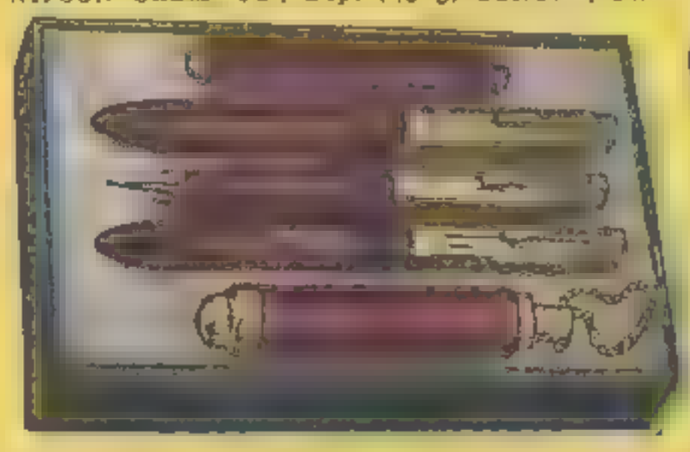

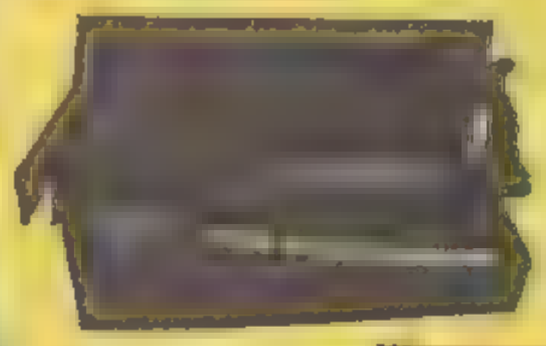

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LOOK A REAL LIVE PONY

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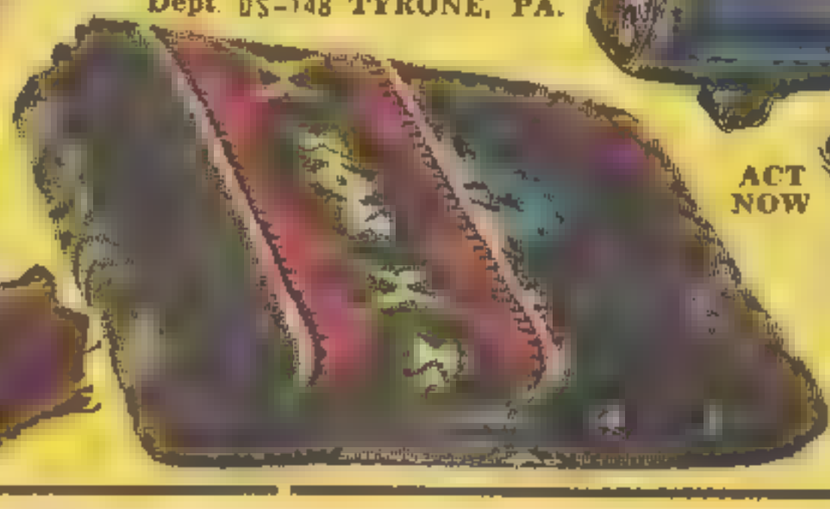
Our 60th Year



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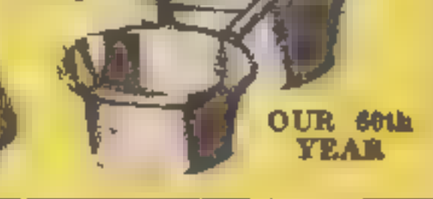

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Print LAST Name Here

Paste on a postal card or mail in an envelope NOW

YOU'RE BEING **TOLD** NOW, KING! THROW DOWN YOUR GUNS AND GET YOUR HANDS HIGH!

HE'S BEHIND THAT ROCK! GET HIM!

THEY MOVED AS ONE, FIRING AS THEY CAME...

COME OUTA THAR, YUH WEASEL... OR BE DRAGGED OUT!

BUT WHEN THEY REACHED THEIR OBJECTIVE...

N-NO ONE'S HERE! HE'S GONE!

HE'S NOTHIN' BUT A SCARED RABBIT! HE LIT OUT... THAT'S WHAT!

WRONG AGAIN KING!

HUH!

HE'S BEHIND THEM BUSHES! C'MON, WE'LL NAIL HIM THIS TIME!

GET 'EM BOYS!

WE'RE SURROUNDED! LET KING PLAY BIG-SHOT IF HE WANTS TO! WE'LL TAKE THE LOOT AND GET OUT BY THE TRAIL DOWN THE RIDGE!

IT MAKES SENSE! I'M FED UP WITH 'IM ANYWAY!

AND WHEN KING TURNED BACK TO HIS MEN...

WHERE ARE THEY? WILSON, BURKE, NATE... THEY'RE GONE! THEY'VE RUN OUT!

YOU'RE ALL ALONE, KING... WASHED UP!

THAT'S A LIE! I'M THE BOSS HERE! ME...KING BELLOWS!

YOU'RE NOT BOSS ANY MORE, KING! YOUR REIGN OF GUN RULE IS FINISHED!

NOT YET, IT AIN'T!

I'M GETTIN' YOU... EMPTY!

THAT'S RIGHT...EMPTY! I KEPT TRACK, KING!

AND YOU'RE NOT GETTING THE CHANCE TO RELOAD!

DISARMED, AND DAZED BY THE KID'S SHOW OF STRENGTH, THE SWAGGERING GUNMAN NOW REVEALED HIS TRUE SELF...

Y-YUH WOULDN'T SHOOT AN UNARMED MAN! IT AIN'T FAIR! I'LL DO ANYTHIN' YUH SAY... ANYTHIN'!

THAT YOU WILL, KING! ON YOUR FEET! WE'RE WALKING OUT OF HERE!

SEVERAL MONTHS LATER THE REMNANTS OF KING'S GANG HAD BEEN ROUNDED UP...

THANKS TO **YOU**, KID, THIS WON'T BE KNOWN AS THE BADLANDS ANY MORE! THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF A WHOLE NEW WAY OF LIFE!

I RECKON IT IS, MR. DORSET...AND A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER!

AND SO IT CAME TO PASS THAT THE BADLANDS RECEIVED A NEW MONARCH...

THEY CALL HER THE ***SILVER QUEEN***, STEEL, AND SHE'S A BEAUTY! HERE'S HOPING SHE HAS A LONG AND PROSPEROUS LIFE!

INSIDE THE CAVE!

THERE GOES JEB AND ABNER AGAIN... STILL LOOKIN' FOR GOLD!

CAN'T SEE WHY OLD JEB BOTHERS TAKIN' ABNER ALONG WITH 'IM! THAT YOUNG NO-GOOD IS AS SHIFTLESS AS A RATTLER!

by Stan Lee & Al Hartley J-7

ABNER, THIS TIME I GOT A FEELIN' IN MY BONES THAT WE'RE GONNA MAKE A STRIKE!

HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT, JEB! IF WE DON'T DO IT THIS TIME, WE'LL BE PLUMB OUT OF MONEY AND PROVISIONS! THERE WON'T BE ANOTHER CHANCE FOR US!

YOU STUPID OLD GOAT! YOU GOT AS MUCH CHANCE OF FINDIN' GOLD AS THAT MULE HAS! AS SOON AS THAT SHERIFF'S POSSE IN YUCAN COUNTY STOPS LOOKIN' FOR ME, I'M GONNA LEAVE YUH FASTER'N A JACK RABBIT!

THIS TIME, LET'S GO RIGHT TO THE TOP OF OLD SNOWY!

WHAT FOR? IT'S TOO TOUGH A CLIMB! LET'S JUST POKE AROUND DOWN HERE!

THAT AIN'T NO WAY TO FIND GOLD, SON! YUH GOTTA WORK AT IT! NOW COME ALONG!

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THERE'S ANY GOLD UP THERE?

JUST A HUNCH, SON! 'SIDES WE BEEN LOOKIN' HERE FOR WEEKS, AND AIN'T FOUND A THING!

NO, BUT THAT POSSE AIN'T FOUND ME, EITHER! AND THAT'S THE WAY I WANT IT!

DAYS LATER...

IT'S HERE SOMEWHERE! I JUST *KNOW* IT!

SURE, JEB, SURE! JUST KEEP A-DIGGIN'! WE'LL FIND IT!

YOU'LL BE PROUD OF ME, SON... WHEN I STRIKE IT, WE'LL BOTH BE RICH!

THE SIGNAL FROM BEN! THAT MEANS THE POSSE IS GONE! IT'S SAFE FOR ME TO LEAVE THE COUNTY!

I GOTTA GET RID OF JEB... GOTTA MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T TALK IN CASE THE POSSE COMES BY HERE! THAT CAVE... IT'S PERFECT!

JEB, LET'S DIG IN THAT CAVE! IT LOOKS TO ME AS THOUGH THERE'S A VEIN IN IT!

SURE, SON... I'M GLAD YOU'RE GETTIN' INTERESTED! I LIKE THAT EAGER LOOK IN YOUR EYE!

THEY ALL WARNED ME NOT TO TEAM UP WITH YUH, ABNER, BUT I TOLD 'EM YOU WERE A GOOD MAN... JUST NEEDED A LITTLE SEASONING, THAT'S ALL!

SURE, JEB, SURE!

THERE! NOW I'LL SEAL THE CAVE MOUTH AND LEAVE 'IM HERE! IT'LL BE YEARS BEFORE ANYONE FINDS 'IM!

I'LL MOVE THIS BOULDER AGAINST THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE... AND THEN I'LL PILE UP SOME AGAINST IT FROM THE OUTSIDE!

THAT BOULDER! IT WAS SUPPORTING THE CAVE WALL! I SHOULDN'T HAVE MOVED IT! IT'S GONNA CAVE IN! *NO!*

HELP... JEB... HELP... *OHHH!*

HOURS LATER, JEB SYKES REACHED TOWN, WITH THE BODY OF ABNER DRAKE!

TOO BAD, BECAUSE HE'D HAVE BEEN RICH, JUST LIKE HE ALWAYS WANTED! IT WAS HIS DISCOVERY, TOO... BECAUSE HE TOLD ME TO LOOK IN THE CAVE!

WHAT A SHAME IT WAS! THE CAVE WALL COLLAPSED, KILLIN' HIM ON THE SPOT! I WAS LUCKY... THERE WAS JUST ENOUGH ROOM FOR ME TO WRIGGLE OUT!

YEP, AND YOU FOUND THE BIGGEST GOLD POCKET EVER SEEN IN THESE PARTS! WELL, THAT'S LIFE, EH, OLD-TIMER?

THE END

shipment before. It's pretty hard to keep a secret 'round these parts. Me and a lot of other people knew as soon as the contracts were signed." Mike leaned up against the door lazily.

After a moment's hesitation, Lem Stewart made up his mind. "It's too late to cancel tomorrow's shipment," he told Clint. "But I'd suggest that the sheriff has his deputies accompany that stage out of here tomorrow." He looked meaningfully at Mike.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you, Mr. Stewart. Like a say . . . mind your own business and everything'll be all right."

Mike left the office then, but the door had hardly closed when another stranger entered.

"Mr. Walker!" Lem called. "Clint, this is Mr. Walker." Then by way of explanation he added, "We all rode in on the stage together."

"*U.S. Marshal* Walker," the man corrected. "I didn't say much before, sir, with a third party present," he nodded toward the door Mike had just left. "I've been sent out here to help your company. If you put that shipment of gold in my care, you won't have anything to worry about from Mr. Stacey. I've had my eye on him for quite a while."

"I'm glad to see you, Marshal . . . mighty glad," Lem told him. Then he repeated the conversation between Mike and himself just a few minutes before. Clint filled him in on the details of the case, and at the end of the story the Marshal declared, "Perhaps it's wise to pick him up on some charge . . . any charge . . . until after the stage leaves tomorrow. Just to be on the safe side."

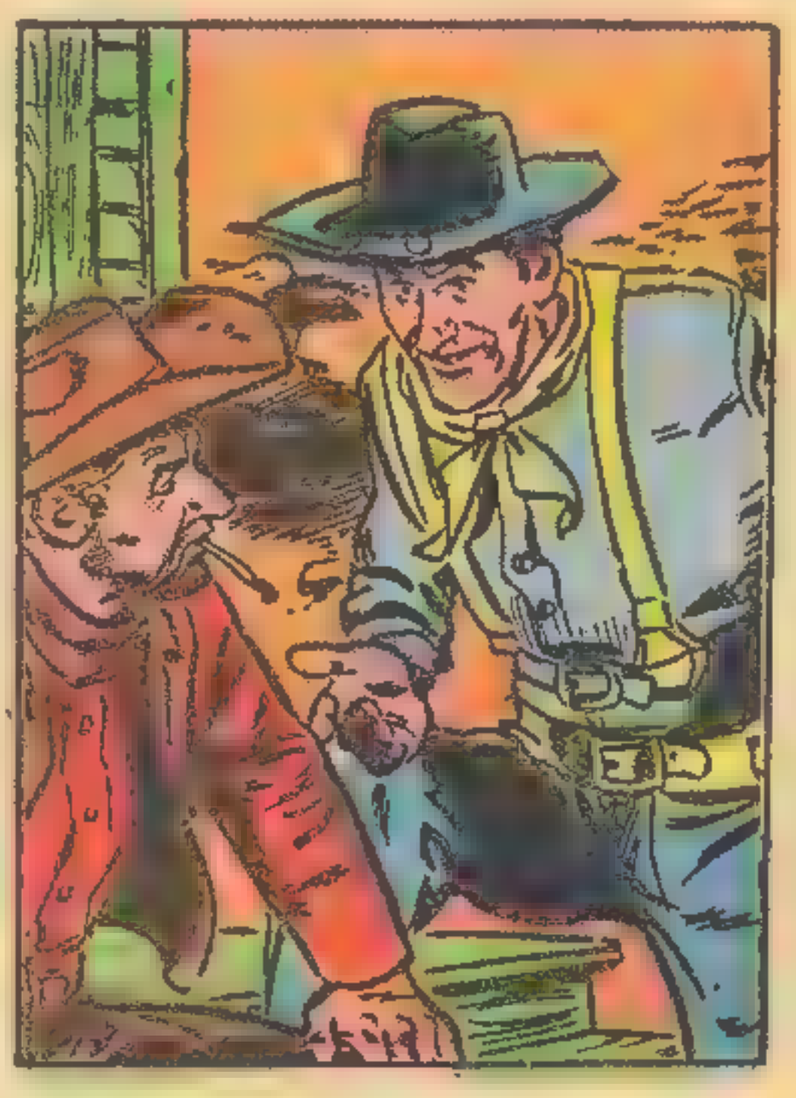
"An excellent idea," Lem and Clint agreed.

A thorough search of town revealed no trace of Mike Stacey. He had rented a horse, the blacksmith reported, and had ridden straight out of town.

"He said he'd be back, though," the blacksmith said. "Sort o' like a threat!"

"More than just a shipment of gold will ride on this stage," Lem told Clint, worriedly. "The whole future of the Wells Fargo line and transportation throughout the West hinges on the success of these shipments. That gold's *got* to get through."

The hours crawled by, and by the time the stage was ready to go the next morning, still no



trace of Stacey had been turned up. Marshal Walker, Lem and Clint watched while the stage was loaded with gold, the horses were harnessed and the driver and shotgun guard mounted to their seats. Suddenly a black shadow loomed up silently behind Walker and a voice pounded gutturally in his ear.

"Throw down your gun, Nate Walsh," Mike Stacey muttered.

Lem and Clint whirled to face Stacey.

"Stay put, you two," Mike commanded. "This play is ours . . . isn't it, Nate Walsh . . . *alias* Marshal Walker."

Walsh started for his gun, but it was a fool's move. Mike brought down his fist hard across Walsh's arm, and the Colt fell to the dust. Walsh followed it, sprawling, grabbing for it, but Clint leaped to it and kicked it out of Walsh's reach.

In seconds, Walsh was on his feet, his arms pinned behind him by Clint and Mike Stacey's eyes close to his.

"I've dogged you all across the West, Nate," Mike growled. "Ever since I left this town to find you, I vowed I'd catch up with you one day. It's only fate that it happened here in Stacey . . . right where it began."

"Mr. Stewart, Clint," Mike spoke to the two men. "Walsh's new gang is waiting up in the hills, near Ridge River by the bend. Tell the sheriff to take a posse up there on the stage. Once you've caught them tryin' to bushwhack the gold again, they'll talk up soon enough. And escort 'Marshal Walker' to jail, boys," Mike ordered. "He'll never have another gang to tip off again."

After Nate Walsh was safe in a cell, Mike shook hands with Clint.

"Thanks, old-timer," he said. "If you hadn't grabbed him when you did . . ."

"As soon as you said 'Nate Walsh,' I knew who he was. He's changed some, but he used to hang around here before . . . well, you know when."

"Let's forget about that, Clint," Mike laughed. "But before we do, suppose you and Mr. Stewart ride back to the big ranch with me. Pa's gonna want a tall lot of explainin' done about that hombre who rode in yesterday on the stage to Stacey."

THE END — H-326

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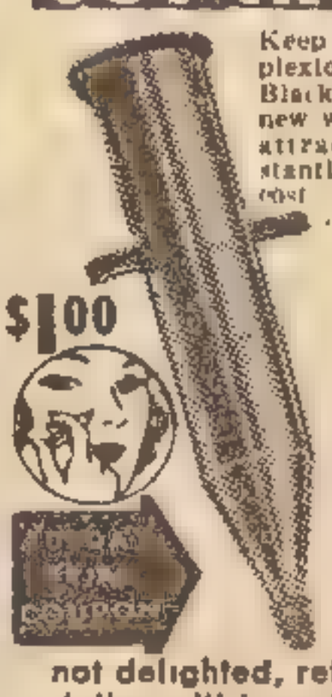

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KID COLT OUTLAW IN "BADMAN'S ROUT!"

PLEASE, MISTER, COME QUICK! THOSE MEN ARE MAKIN' TROUBLE, AND MY MA IS ALL ALONE!

THE BOY'S PLEA FOR HELP CAME THROUGH A TORRENT OF TEARS, AND AS THE KID LISTENED, HIS ANGER MOUNTED LIKE A RISING STORM!

JACK KELLER

J48

SWIFT MOMENTS LATER...

TAKE YOUR HANDS OFF ME!

GRAB YORE IRONS! HERE COMES TROUBLE!

AND TROUBLE IT WAS... SWIFT AND OVERWHELMING!

GET THE... OHHH!

OWWW!

I'LL SETTLE YORE... OWWAH!

OOOF!

I RECKON I'LL SETTLE FIRST!

SHORTLY AFTERWARD WHEN THE GRIM-FACED KID HELD THE DROP ON THE BAND...

YOU'LL BE GETTIN' PAID BACK FOR THIS, MISTER! YUH C'N COUNT ON THAT!

SUIT YOURSELF, BUT REMEMBER THIS...

I DON'T COTTON TO HOMBRES WHO PICK ON WIDOWS AND SMALL BOYS! SHOW UP ON THIS SPREAD AGAIN, AND I'LL BE PLAYING FOR KEEPS! NOW RIDE!

A SHORT WHILE LATER, WHEN THE TRIO WAS ALONE...

AN' HIS NAME IS KID COLT, MOM... AN' HE'S THE BEST FIGHTER IN THE WHOLE WORLD!

WE'RE MIGHTY GRATEFUL FOR YOUR HELP, MR COLT! MY NAME IS ANNE PALMER!

YOUR SON TOLD ME ABOUT HIS DAD BEING DEAD! I RECKON MOST OF YOUR TROUBLE SPRINGS FROM THAT!

WHEN JIM DIED, EDDIE AND I DECIDED TO STAY ON! IT'S A GOOD RANCH!

SUDDENLY, THE POUND OF HOOF-BEATS THUDDED THEIR WAY...

HEY, MOM... IT'S JEFF!

HE WOULD COME NOW... AFTER EVERY-THING IS OVER!

MINUTES LATER...

I PASSED LINK AND HIS BOYS ON THE WAY IN! DID THEY GIVE YOU ANY TROUBLE, ANNE?

I FOUND THEM TEARING UP MY FENCE POSTS... DIRECT ORDERS OF HANK FLETCHER, NO DOUBT!

RUNNING A RANCH IS NO JOB FOR A WOMAN! MAYBE YOU SHOULD TAKE FLETCHER'S OFFER!

I'LL NEVER DO BUSINESS WITH HIM, AND I'VE LOST ALL FAITH IN *YOU*... NOW THAT YOU WORK FOR HIM!

IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO STAY ON *HERE*... WITH YOUR INSISTING ON RUNNING THINGS!

IT'S *MY* RANCH, JEFF BARLOWE... AND I'LL RUN IT ANY WAY *I* SEE IT!

HANK FLETCHER IS ANXIOUS TO ACQUIRE MY SPREAD, AND HE'S USED EVERY MEASURE TO MAKE ME SELL! BUT I *WON'T!*

SEVERAL DAYS LATER, AT HANK FLETCHER'S SPREAD...

THIS COLT HOMBRE'S NO PUSH-OVER, HANK! EVER SINCE HE'S BEEN AT THE PALMER PLACE, THAR'S NO GETTIN' NEAR IT!

I'M NOT THROUGH YET...

I'LL HAVE THAT PALMER WOMAN SIGNIN' OVER THE DEED PLENTY FAST! GET THE BOYS IN HERE, AND I'LL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING!

THAT EVENING...

WHAT'S WRONG, EDDIE?

IT'S A FIRE... ON THE NORTH FIELD!

THERE IT IS, KID!

IT'S KINDA STRANGE HAVING A FIRE BREAK OUT THIS EARLY IN SPRING! I WONDER IF...

THERE GOES SOMEONE NOW! YOU TAKE OF THAT FIRE, EDDIE... I'M GOING AFTER HIM!

IT'S THAT COLT HOMBRE... AN' HE'S CLOSIN' IN!

SECONDS LATER, A WHISTLING LARIAT FOUND ITS MARK...

HEY!

AND WHEN THE KID CLOSED IN...

NOW START TALKING! WHAT'S BEHIND ALL THIS?

FLETCHER PLANS TO BLOW UP THE DAM... PUT PALMER'S PLACE UNDER WATER AND RUIN THE GRAZIN'!

FIVE MINUTES LATER, THE KID WAS ON HIS WAY...

HOLD ON... YUH CAN'T LEAVE ME LIKE THIS!

I'LL BE BACK LATER... WITH THE SHERIFF!

MEANWHILE, AT THE DAM SITE...

HURRY UP, LINK... BEFORE COLT SHOWS UP!

THAR'S NOTHIN' TO WORRY ABOUT! HE'S OUT FIGHTIN' THAT FIRE! WE'LL TAKE OUR TIME, AN' MAKE A GOOD JOB OF IT!

SUDDENLY!

THAT'LL BE ALL... AND KEEP YOUR HANDS RIGHT WHERE THEY ARE!

HUH?

BUT IN THE VERY NEXT MOMENT...

KEEP GOIN', BOYS... AND YOU, HOMBRE, DROP THEM IRONS PRONTO!

NOTHING DOING, FLETCHER! YOU DROP YOURS!

HUH?

HE SAID DROP IT, FLETCHER!

WITH FLASHING SPEED, THE KID FOLLOWED THROUGH, HIS FAMOUS COLTS ROILING THE AIR WITH THUNDEROUS BLASTS...

THE FOLLOWING DAY, AFTER FLETCHER AND HIS GUN-TOTERS WERE IN THE SHERIFF'S CUSTODY...

WE ALL OWE YOU THANKS, MR. COLT! WITHOUT YOUR HELP, I WOULD HAVE BEEN FORCED OUT!

THERE WON'T BE ANY TROUBLE ANY MORE... ESPECIALLY NOW WITH JEFF COMING BACK AS FOREMAN!

NOT AS FOREMAN, KID! ANNE AND I ARE GOING TO GET MARRIED! THAT IS, IF IT'S ALL RIGHT BY EDDIE!

IT SURE *IS*, JEFF... I MEAN, IT SURE IS, *DAD!*

THE END

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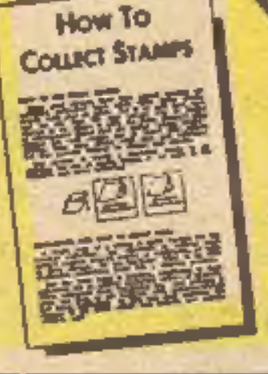

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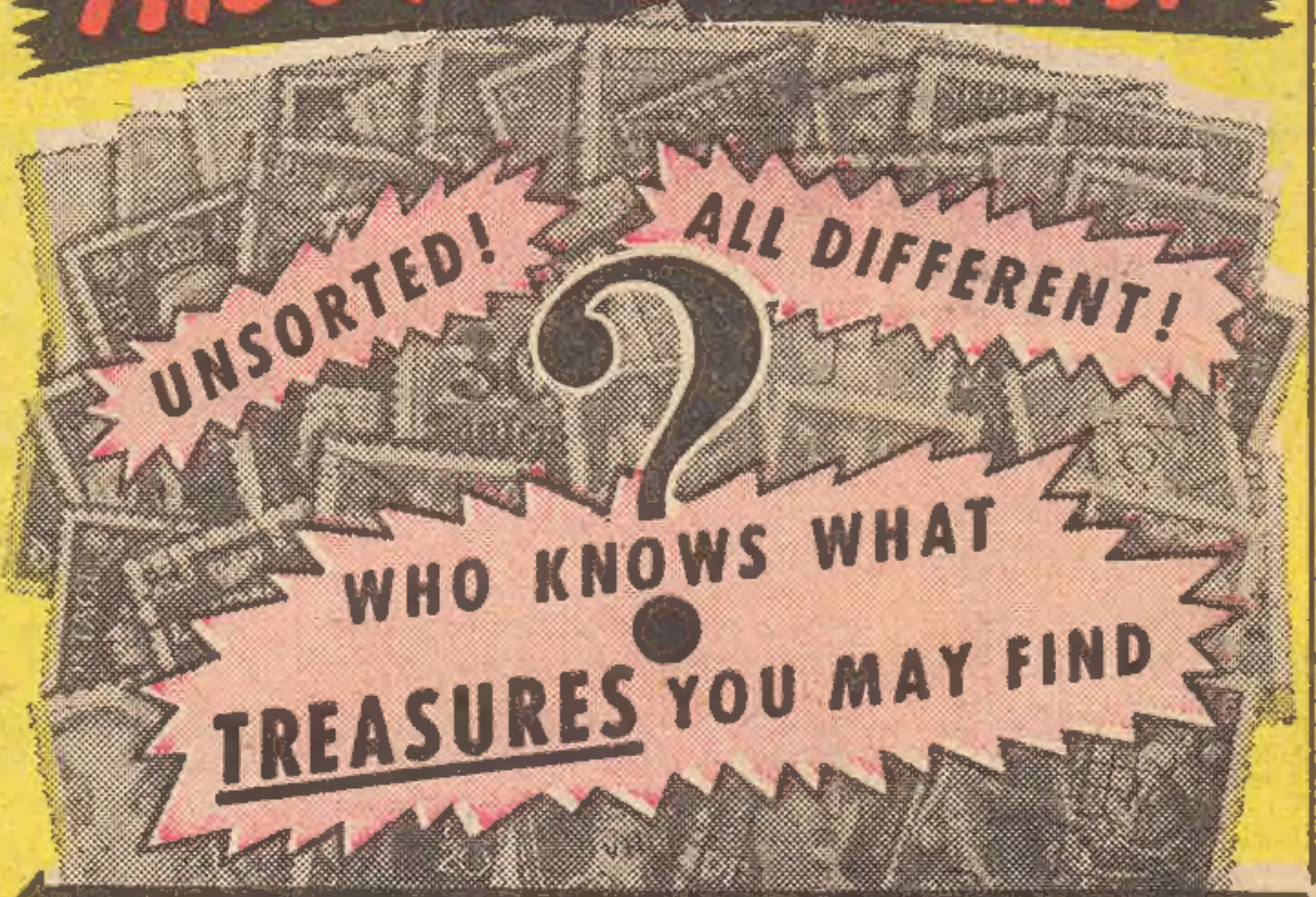

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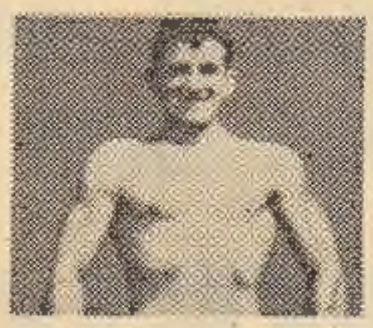

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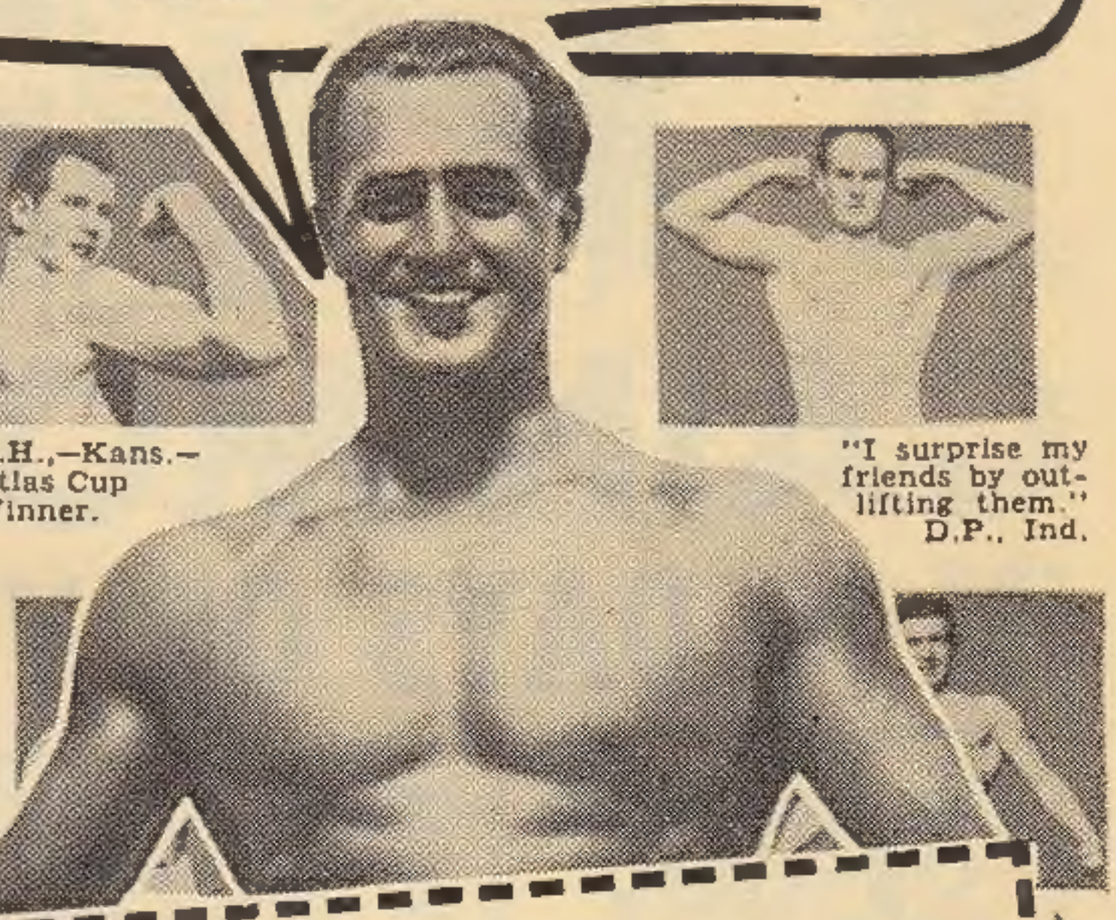

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